

Caesar Rodney School District, Jefferson School win U.S. Green Ribbon Awards

Award honors schools, districts, and postsecondary institutions for reducing environmental impact and costs, improving health and wellness, offering effective sustainability education

The Caesar Rodney School District and the private Jefferson School are 2019 U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon winners, federal officials announced today.

Across the country, 35 schools, 14 districts, and four post-secondary institutions are being honored for their innovative efforts to address the three “pillars” of the program: reducing environmental impact and utility costs, improving health and wellness, and ensuring effective sustainability education. A state education official is also being recognized for his efforts to advance school sustainability in the state of Minnesota.

The honorees were named from a pool of candidates nominated by 28 states. The selectees include 25 public schools as well as 10 nonpublic schools. Thirty-six percent of the 2019 honorees serve a disadvantaged student body.

“The Caesar Rodney School District and the Jefferson School exemplify how our schools can reduce their environmental impact, save resources, improve the health and wellness of their communities and provide students with hands-on, engaging

learning,” Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said. “This national recognition is well deserved.”

Delaware’s winners will be honored by Governor John Carney next week. The event is at 9:30 a.m. May 29 at Caesar Rodney School District’s W. Reily Brown Elementary, 360 Webbs Lane in Dover.

More about Delaware’s winners

- Caesar Rodney School District: Each of the 12 schools in the Kent County district has its own student-led EcoTeam, giving all students from prekindergarten to 12th grade “an outlet to share and work out their ideas for Delaware green schools and to collaborate with each other.” Students have led reforms, such as the “share tables” started in some cafeterias. Children place unopened, unwanted items on the table for others in an effort to reduce food waste. The district’s Postlethwait Middle School, Frear Elementary and Charlton School comprise “the EcoCampus at CRSD,” which is evolving into “a district hub for green schools initiatives, teacher professional development and student field experiences.” Teachers across the district are provided resources to “facilitate installation or renovation of outdoor classrooms, community gardens, and compost centers on their campuses.” Rain gardens to manage storm water also were added. Community partnerships with environmental groups and government agencies has provided additional opportunities for educational experiences for students and resources to support environmental education and facility improvements. The district also has worked to

improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of its facilities.

- Jefferson School: The private Georgetown school, which adjoins the Redden State Forest, promotes “active, engaged learning via multi-sensory, hands-on experiences.” Educators incorporate into the curriculum the school’s 43-acre campus – which includes two ponds, trails with fitness stations, an outdoor classroom, a nature explore classroom area, pollinator and vegetable gardens, greenhouse, goats, chickens, beehives, numerous tree, bush and wildflower plantings, and purple martin nest houses. Since 2010, the school has worked with regional partners including environmental nonprofits and state agencies. The school also has worked in recent years to “create an educational facility that can be shared with the larger community,” including the hiring of an environmental science coordinator and summer outdoor program coordinator to facilitate such programming.

“I am extremely proud and appreciative of all the work that was done to help us earn this award. This achievement is the result of sustained commitment. These aren’t changes you make overnight, and our work isn’t over. We will continue to seek more ways to reduce our district’s environmental impact, improve the health and wellness of our Rider community and provide our students with an exemplary education around the environment and sustainability. Our students and their teachers under the guidance of Mr. Todd Klawinski made this happen, and I congratulate them for this prestigious honor.” Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald, said.

State Senator Harris McDowell III, chairman of the Oversight Board for Energize Delaware, praised the collaborative work of

Delaware schools, nonprofits and government agencies: “It is so good to see that a program like Pathways to Green Schools results in teaching students about the importance of sustainability efforts. They will shape the future in the energy efficiency landscape.”

DNREC Secretary Shawn M. Garvin also lauded the winners.

“We congratulate the Caesar Rodney School District and the Jefferson School for this prestigious designation,” Garvin said. “Students are involved in research about local environmental issues that affect their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. They are reaching far beyond textbooks and connecting directly with the environment that surrounds them. Clearly, the Caesar Rodney School District and the Jefferson School have reached above and beyond to become excellent environmental stewards.”

The list of all selected schools, districts, colleges and universities, as well as their nomination packages, can be found [here](#). A report with highlights on the 53 honorees can be found [here](#). More information on the federal recognition award can be found [here](#). Resources for all schools to move toward the three pillars can be found [here](#).

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